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DISCOURSE,

AT THE OPENING OF

THE PROVIDENCE ATHENEUM.

JULY 11, 1838.

BY FRANCIS WAYLAND.



Jas. B. Cooper
A *Feb. 25-1850.*

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF

THE PROVIDENCE ATHENÆUM,

JULY 11, 1838.

BY FRANCIS WAYLAND.

—



PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE DIRECTORS OF THE ATHENÆUM.

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PROVIDENCE:
KNOWLES, VOSE & COMPANY.
1838.

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DISCOURSE.

MR. PRESIDENT,
GENTLEMEN PROPRIETORS OF THE ATHENÆUM,
AND FELLOW-CITIZENS OF PROVIDENCE :

PERMIT me to congratulate you upon the occasion which has, this day, called us together. We meet to celebrate the accomplishment of one of the most important undertakings in which the benevolent enterprise of this city has ever been enlisted. We assemble to hear the cheering announcement that the arrangements for the establishment of the Providence Athenæum have been completed. The chaste and beautiful edifice with which it has adorned our city is finished. The literary treasures, which, with so much spirit and judgment it has collected, have now found a permanent resting place. Its doors have been, to-day, for the first time, thrown open, and every arrangement has been perfected, by which you and your children may have access to it.

With the history of this undertaking, you are, I presume, sufficiently acquainted. Two preceding efforts for supplying the intellectual wants of this city had nearly proved abortive, when a munificent donation from one of our most distinguished families imparted new vigor to the enterprise, and the zealous co-operation of a liberal public has carried it forward to a successful termination. About seven thousand volumes, selected with the greatest care, and comprising a most valuable portion of the literature of our language, are already spread open before you. A library of greater extent than adorns the mansion of probably any private individual in our country, is accessible to every one of us. Nor is this all. The plan of the institution embraces arrangements for the reception of every thing, either useful or interesting, in the periodical literature of the day. Thus, every one among us has the opportunity of tracing, through previous ages, the progress of the human mind; he may, here, at any moment, learn, not only what man has done, but what man is actually doing. The past and the present are both equally open to his inspection, and his mind can hold high communion with the mighty living, and with the yet more mighty dead.

From these remarks, you immediately perceive the object of this institution. It is to provide *the means for the universal diffusion of knowledge, of knowledge in its most extensive signification,*

among the citizens of Providence. And here, I am happy to inform you, my fellow-citizens, that the views of the gentlemen who have embarked in this undertaking, are worthy of the cause in which they have engaged, and deserving the grateful acknowledgments of an enlightened community. They have entertained the noblest conceptions of the kind of library which you would desire to collect for yourselves, and to bequeath to your children. Confining themselves, at present, to the purchase of books in the English language, they desire to make the Athenæum the repository of whatever of great, or good, or beautiful, the English mind has produced. They have proceeded upon the supposition that the intellectual and moral character of our city, for all coming time, would, in no small degree, be determined by the nature of the reading which they were here providing. They have asked themselves what is that type of character which it is most desirable to impress upon our whole community. And having been convinced that elevated character can be formed, only as every power of the understanding and every pure affection of the heart are fully and harmoniously developed, they have determined that no effort of theirs shall be wanting, to give the means of such development to our entire population. It will be *our* fault, not *theirs*, if this noble design be not carried into effect.

With this view, they have determined that this library shall be a repository for the standard Eng-

lish works, in every *science*, with which an intelligent community would desire to become acquainted. They believe that such an institution should contain the intellectual aliment, by which the genius of a Davy, an Arkwright, a Franklin, a Rittenhouse, or a Bowditch, might be nourished. God has scattered the seeds of pre-eminent ability as profusely among the poor as among the rich. When such gifts perish, through the want of cultivation, the loss is suffered by mankind. It becomes us, then, as philanthropists and as citizens, to provide for the whole community the means of cultivating, in the most perfect manner, the whole of that talent with which the Creator has enriched it.

This, however, comprises but a small part of their design. That portion of science and of the applications of science, which will be required for the purposes to which I have alluded, may be contained within a narrow compass. Having thus provided the means for attaining a knowledge of the *laws* of the universe, their next endeavor will be to collect the *facts* which its history has unfolded. It is their design here to provide the student with the means of investigating the *history* of man, as he is seen in every stage of his transition from barbarism to civilization, under all the diversified influences of climate and situation, of political and religious institutions, of poverty and wealth, of prosperity and decline. But *history* would be imperfectly understood, without a knowl-

edge of *biography*. Hence it is their intention to furnish the reader with a collection of the lives of those, who, in any age, have distinguished themselves, either by profoundness of knowledge, brilliancy of achievement, or splendor of discovery. They mean that we should here have the opportunity of holding communion with the warriors and statesmen, the philosophers and scholars, the poets and orators, the civilians and divines, who have made their names illustrious by the changes which they have wrought in the current of human thought, or feeling, or action. We may thus be enabled to trace the most stupendous effects to their elementary causes, and to behold what responsibility God has conferred upon genius; and to observe how signally it is in the power of individual man to bequeath happiness or misery to the entire race of which he forms a part.

But the facts which respect man alone, form but a small part of that knowledge which it becomes us to acquire. Our globe itself has been subjected to accurate observation, and the changes through which it has passed, during the long period of its existence, have been traced with scarcely less than philosophical accuracy. The *vegetable* productions which cover it have been examined and classified, their characters described, their uses ascertained, and their modes of cultivation carefully illustrated. The *animal* kingdom, in all its varieties, whether inhabiting the air, the water, or the

land, has, from the time of Aristotle, attracted the attention of the naturalist, until now, at last, by the labors of Cuvier, its whole extent has been brought within the view of the philosopher. Of the utility or of the attractiveness of these studies, it is superfluous here to speak. I surely need not tell you, how greatly the knowledge which they unfold conduces to the development of national resources; nor how admirably calculated are the classifications to which they are subjected, to discipline and invigorate the human understanding. Aware of this, it is the intention of the Directors of the Athenæum to enrich their collection, as far as it may be in their power, with works on natural science. I am happy also to add, that, in this department, their library is at present exceedingly valuable. They already possess some of the most important and expensive works on natural history, and their collection of travels and voyages is both extensive and well selected.

But the laws of nature, and the facts which have transpired, and the beings which *actually exist*, are far from being all that is comprehended within the domain of human knowledge. The wonder-working power of the imagination, has created forms of awful grandeur and of surpassing loveliness. By the contemplation of these, the love of the beautiful is cultivated, the taste is refined, and the social sympathies are purified and ennobled. Hence, it is the intention of the Directors of this

institution, to render it rich in every thing, whether in prose or verse, whether in didactic literature or the literature of fiction, with which genius has ennobled our mother tongue.

Such, I say, is their design. It is needless to add, that they have ~~not~~ yet accomplished it. The funds placed within their control have been as yet but small in amount. They have made only a beginning. But, in so far as they have gone, they have proceeded upon the principles which I have stated. They wish to accumulate, here, the treasures of human thought, and to furnish for this community the richest intellectual nourishment which our language affords. Whether the design shall be accomplished, is to be decided by *yourselves*. It is for *you* to say whether this plan shall be completed, and whether the means shall be provided, not only for securing to ourselves the benefit of what the human mind has, in past ages, discovered, illustrated, or adorned, but, also, for securing, to successive generations, whatever of true, or beautiful, or good, the inspirations of genius may address to the intellect, the imagination, or the heart.

It is proper, fellow-citizens, that I should refer this decision thus publicly to you, because this institution is intended for your own peculiar benefit. Admittance to its privileges is designedly rendered so easy, that, for all practical purposes,

it may, in effect, be declared free. It is, moreover, the design of the proprietors, that it should be useful *to all*. While they look at the treasures of human thought, *in general*, they do not forget that they are collecting books for men *in particular*. Hence, they wisely adjust the general principles of their selection to the case of the community in whose behalf they act. They intend that there shall be no occupation, whether professional or industrial, which shall not here find the means both of instruction and relaxation. They mean here to open a fountain of living water, at which the intellectual thirst of this whole community may be slaked.

And here let me pause to remark, that, at no period whatever, in the history of our country, could an effort like the present be more precisely opportune. We have arrived at a crisis in the progress of civilization, such as, I believe, has rarely, if ever, been witnessed. Those nations of modern times, which have felt the impulse of the Reformation, have directed all their efforts to the simple object of widely disseminating the elements of an education. Their highest aim has been to see that "the schoolmaster be abroad," and thus to enable every citizen to read in his mother tongue. But, in New-England, all this has long since been accomplished. The schoolmaster here has always been *at home*. There is scarcely a native born man, or woman, or child among us, who is not

able to read, and write, and keep accounts. The book of the English language, with whatever it contains of life or of death, and whatever of these it may hereafter contain, is spread open before the whole community.

But, who does not see, that the accomplishment of this very purpose, noble and worthy of all praise though it be, has only imposed upon us the duty of still nobler and more praiseworthy effort? We have created in the whole community a desire for intelligence, and that desire must be gratified. We have put it in the power of every man to read, and read he will, whether for good or for evil. It remains yet to be decided, whether what we have already done, shall prove a blessing or a curse. It is for us to determine, whether this mind, which we have thus awakened from the slumbers of ignorance, shall sink back into lethargy; a lethargy rendered sadder by the consciousness that the being was formed for something better; or whether, in its dim gropings after intellectual food, it shall imbibe the poison of blank atheism, and remorseless, desolating, brute sensuality; or whether, seizing with a strong hand upon the means which we have ourselves created, we shall impress upon the present and upon all future generations, the seal of high intellectual character, and of elevated social virtue.

If we desire, then, to reap the benefit of all our previous exertions, it must be done by carrying

out the plan which the proprietors of the Athenæum have adopted. We must render knowledge, valuable knowledge, accessible to the whole community. We must collect the treasures of science and literature, and throw them open to all who are disposed to avail themselves of their benefits. We must provide the means by which the light of intellect shall shine into every house, and pour its reviving beams into the bosom of every family. And still more, we must act for the future. In our present state, no great object can be accomplished, unless we act for posterity. We must, therefore, lay the foundations of this institution in such principles, that it will grow with the growth of intelligence, widening and deepening the channels of its influence, as it passes on from age to age, more and more thoroughly imbuing every successive race with admiration of all that is great, with love for all that is beautiful, and with reverence for all that is holy. I need scarcely remind you, that it is upon such principles that the present institution is founded.

And when I ascribe such results to an effort of this nature, I have in view its indirect, as well as its direct effects. I believe that a great impression will be produced upon the character of our fellow-citizens by reading the books which will be collected in yonder building. But this is far from being all. The taste for reading which will there be created and fostered, will rapidly develop itself

in other forms. He, who has there learned to derive pleasure from intellectual cultivation, will speedily begin to collect books around his own fireside. The choicest specimens of literature will thus find a home in every house. That an intellectual being should consider a library as an indispensable portion of the furniture of his dwelling-place, will cease to be regarded as a phenomenon. If I do not mistake, this effect has, already, in some degree, been observed among us. It will rapidly increase. Our children will grow up in the consciousness that the cultivation of the mind has an appropriate place in the business of life. From their earliest infancy, they will be imbued with a love of letters. A cultivated intellect will be the characteristic of no one profession. *The whole people will be cultivated*, and every one will enjoy the full benefit arising from the complete development of his intellectual nature.

Nor is this all. If we carry out this enterprise to its legitimate result, it cannot fail to excite other towns in our country to emulate our example. More than half of a new work is accomplished, when it is shown that the thing is practicable. There is scarcely a flourishing village in the United States, which is not abundantly able to furnish itself with all the means of high intellectual cultivation. We believe that the time is approaching, when all this will be actually accomplished ; when there shall be found scarcely a respectable citizen,

who is not familiar with the standard works in English literature, and the elementary principles of the useful sciences. But whether all this shall be done, or not, it is in our power to show that it is all practicable, and that if it be left undone, the fault is *emphatically our own*. God has put it in our power to form the character of this whole people, to render the free institutions of this country a blessing, not only to ourselves but to the world, and to render that blessing perpetual. The present is the very crisis of our destiny. In a few years it will be forever too late.

“ Men, at some times, are masters of their fates.
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in *our stars*,
But in *ourselves*, that we are underlings.”

In order, gentlemen, to encourage you in carrying forward the effort in which you are engaged, suffer me to allude to a few of the advantages which result from that universal diffusion of useful knowledge, which you purpose to accomplish.

The *economical* advantages of this diffusion of knowledge, are easily illustrated.

Every one must be aware, at the instant, that the actual capabilities of any portion of the earth's surface, are, what the mathematicians call a fixed quantity. They cannot be increased by any power of man. They are what God has made them, and their limits were determined before the mountains

were brought forth, or ever he had formed the earth or the world. All that man can do, is, to develop the resources which the Creator has placed in his power, and to use those means of benefitting his condition, which are strewed, in such rich profusion, around him.

But how shall the treasures of any given portion of the earth be discovered, and made available to the production of human happiness, unless by the development of man's *intellectual* power? This we are able to increase, beyond any assignable limit. It is science, which reveals to man the benefits which have been conferred upon him by a bountiful Creator, which enables him so to employ them as to remedy the evils of his present condition, and attain to all the happiness of which the constitution under which he lives is susceptible. The source of national, as well as of individual greatness, is thus found to be in the *spiritual nature* of man. It is only by improving the *mind* of a people, that we can, with certainty, improve their physical condition. The happiness and the comfort which you every where perceive in a prosperous and thriving community, are nothing but the exponent of elevated national virtue and improved national understanding.

And thus, it has always been observed, that the wealth and the happiness of a people, are not in proportion to their natural advantages, but to their

intellectual and moral culture. Thus must it ever be. The gifts of God are always *means*, of which we may avail ourselves or not, at our pleasure. It is by the cultivation of our *spiritual nature* alone, that we learn to profit by our advantages. It is thus that we ascertain the capacities of the soil, the treasures of the mine, and the riches of the ocean. It is thus, that we ascertain the laws of nature, and appropriate them to our advantage, and thus we learn how to derive reciprocal benefit from the labors of all nations, and enrich ourselves with the blessings of every clime.

In confirmation of all this, you need only consult the record either of the present or of the past.

In glancing, for a moment, over the map of Europe, let your eye rest upon the little territory of Switzerland. You behold her environed by nations whose institutions are directly at variance with her own. She does not possess a single inch of seaboard. Destitute of navigable rivers, her products can arrive at a market only by difficult, and, frequently, dangerous roads, and by the payment of heavy transit duties. Her territory comprises nothing but mountain piled upon mountain; as though some vast catastrophe had heaved from its depths, the crust of the globe itself, and then jammed together the fragments in the least possible space. Yet, under all these disadvantages, what is now the condition of Switzerland? In

every rocky defile, the hand of industry is, at this moment, gathering its harvests. Cultivation has crept up the side of every mountain, and every cliff is rendered available for the sustentation of man, on which a goat can gain a foothold. The spinning-wheel and loom are heard in every hamlet. The thrifty artisan has established himself in every village. The manufactures of Switzerland penetrate every country in the civilized world, sending back, in exchange, the means of comfort and independence to her whole population. Stern, hardy, and fearless, gallantly hath this little republic borne herself, in the face of all Europe. And, at this very moment, it is to her almost inaccessible mountains that you must look, for the brightest specimens of continental civilization. Who does not perceive that all this is the result of intellectual cultivation triumphing over every infelicity of soil and of situation? It is the *mind* of Switzerland, intelligent, virtuous, and free, which has spread comfort and competence throughout her borders, and given her a name among civilized nations, which imperial Austria might envy.

A yet ~~more~~ striking illustration of the power of intellectual and moral cultivation, may be seen in the country which we delight to call our fatherland. When we look upon the map of Europe, we might almost suppose that Great Britain was designed to be, as it actually was in the times of Julius Cæsar, the inconsiderable ally of the conti-

mental nations in its vicinity. If we land upon her shores, we behold much of her soil naturally sterile, and her whole territory exposed to all the disadvantages of a high northern latitude. To what but to her successful cultivation of man's spiritual nature, is it owing, that she has made every field on her island a garden; that she has extracted inexhaustible riches from the bowels of the earth; that her manufactures enter the habitation of every dweller on the globe, who is not a brute barbarian; that she hath scooped out for herself harbors in every estuary along her rocky-bound coast; that she now sways her sceptre over a territory upon which the sun never sets; that she hath dared to meet, single-handed, the continent in arms; that, although defeated, yet, nothing daunted, she returned with unabated vigor to the conflict, until at Waterloo she trampled in the dust the proudest military despotism the world had ever seen; and then, without seeming to be even flurried by the struggle, calmly resumed the arts of peace, and, by universal consent, took her place at the head of European civilization!

Or, if we desire examples nearer home, we may easily find them among ourselves. I need not speak of the present condition of New-England. Her wealth, her industry, the universal diffusion of the means of physical happiness throughout her borders; the influence which she so beneficially exerts over the destinies of this nation, are

all acknowledged.* But whence arises all this? Her soil is sterile. Her climate is variable and harsh. Winter holds stern possession of her fields during eight months of the year. Her minerals scanty, and, comparatively, valueless. It has been said, that her mines yield nothing for exportation but granite. Whence, then, that wealth, that power, that influence? It arises neither from her natural advantages nor from her numerical strength, but from the intelligence which the Puritans transplanted hither, and from those institutions which they formed for the future development of that intelligence. It is this which has covered her barren hills with pasturage, and crowded her harbors with fleets. It is this which has taught every waterfall to labor for her benefit, and carried competence to the door of every family throughout her borders.

But we have taught the secret of our success to every State in the Union. What we have already done, they are now doing; and they will soon do

* "The two or three main ideas, which constitute the basis of the social theory of the United States, were first combined in the northern British colonies, more generally denominated the States of New-England. The principles of New-England spread at first to the neighboring States; they then passed successively to the more distant ones, and, at length, they imbued the whole confederation. They now extend their influence beyond its limits, over the whole American world. The civilization of New-England has been like a beacon lit upon a hill, which, after it has diffused its warmth around, tinges the distant horizon with its glow." — DE TOCQUEVILLE: *Democracy in America*. — pp. 13, 14.

it as well as we ourselves. If, then, we would hold that rank by the power of intellect, which we cannot hold either by wealth or by numbers, or by extent of territory, we must put forth still greater efforts. If the dissemination of a little knowledge has done for us so much, let us try what can be effected by the universal dissemination of high intelligence. If we have taken the lead in this confederacy of nations, merely by establishing schools, let us maintain our position by throwing, broadcast, over this whole community, the means by which schools can be rendered most eminently useful. And, since it seems to be the design of Providence, that New-England shall be the nursery of men for this whole nation, let us send abroad among the newly-rising States, citizens of liberal intelligence and disinterested patriotism; imbued with the love of science and order, and disciplined in the school of virtue and religion; and let us not cease from our labor, until it be "distinction proud enough for any common man," that he drew his first breath in the land of the Puritans.

And in all this, there is no narrow sectarianism, no unhallowed rivalry. It is only the noble emulation of generous minds, to be first in every thing that is great, or good, or illustrious. We rejoice to enter the lists in such a contest. We will, in such a cause, do all that may become good men and true; and, having done this, if we be excelled by others, we will joyfully award to them the palm

which they have faithfully earned, and as proudly follow in their footsteps, as we now behold them following in ours.

I have, however, already, delayed you too long on this part of the subject, and much which I intended to say must, therefore, be omitted. I might easily show you that these are the general principles on which national prosperity depends, and that they apply with the same precision to particular localities as to the whole community. They are as true of the State of Rhode-Island and the city of Providence, as they are of New-England or of the United States, of Switzerland or of Great Britain. I say then, that, if we desire to see abundance gladden every dwelling in our city and our commonwealth; if we would see our fields yield the richest and most abundant harvests; our manufactures conducted with the greatest skill, economy, and profit; our exports and imports expanded to the greatest possible amount; if we would behold our merchants introducing our manufactures into every market on the globe, not in the spirit of reckless speculation, but with the clear-sighted sagacity of men who know how to avail themselves of every honorable advantage, and who would scorn to avail themselves of any other, I here deliberately say, that all this is to be accomplished by providing for the universal dissemination, among our citizens, of the means of high intelligence; and by spreading open, before every man, the volume of science and literature, of virtue and religion.

It is time, however, that I proceed to consider some of the *social* benefits which result from that diffusion of knowledge, at which this institution aims.

I have endeavored to show that intellectual cultivation is the true source of national prosperity. But national prosperity is not unattended by moral trials. It is as true of nations as of individuals, that the path of prosperity is thickly strown with temptations. Wealth multiplies our opportunities for the gratification of the passions. It spreads before us the means of enjoyment, which were before beyond our ability. Hence it stimulates, frequently, to riot, the love of pleasure, while, by raising us apparently above the rank which we lately occupied, it seems to liberate us from the wholesome restraints of public opinion. Hence it is, that wealth is so fatal to character, and, when newly made, is even more frequently fatal, than hereditary wealth.

The gratifications which are the most directly within the power of money, are the gratifications of the senses. Hence it is, that the accumulation of property directly tends to sensuality. Thus, the starving foreigner, who has but just landed on our shores, by the sudden increase of his wages, is too frequently transformed into an irreclaimable drunkard. Thus, also, the virtuous young man, who, educated in the simple manners of the country, and inured to daily labor and lightness of

pocket, enters our cities, by the inordinately high salary of mercantile clerkship, is changed, in a few months, into the fop, the gambler, and the debauchee; it is well, if it be not into the murderer. And when sensuality takes not so gross a form, it is yet sufficiently deplorable. It stimulates to every form of personal gratification; to the pitiable ambition of precedence in every mode of fashionable expenditure, to thoughtless extravagance in dress, in habitations, in equipage; to the waste of time in useless and effeminating accomplishments, and to the cultivation of the material and the visible, in preference to the intellectual, the social, and the moral.

The effects of all this are surely terrific, if we consider merely their individual bearings. Sensuality, in its grosser forms, tends, as you well know, to arsenic or the alms-house, the gutter or the gallows. And when it is dressed in all the habiliments of refinement, and moves in obedience to the prescribed laws of etiquette, it is still radically subversive of all manliness of character, and utterly incompatible with all true loftiness of purpose. Its results are remorseless selfishness and contemptible frivolity. Under the dominion of the senses, the love of the grand perishes, and even the love of the beautiful becomes sickly and deformed. The mind, engrossed by but one thought, that of its own gratification, becomes dwarfed and infantile. The affections, laying hold of nothing

noble, become first chilled, and then corroded. Every baleful passion takes root in the soul, as, in advancing years, every generous sentiment is eradicated. And the only consolation that remains to us, is, that the heartless wickedness which might have been, from its malignity, terrific, is rendered, by its own inherent weakness, incapable of rising to the dignity of being even contemptible.

Nor are the *political* evils resulting from the sensuality of the rich, unworthy of notice. This view of the subject has, however, been lately so eloquently set before you, by one of our most distinguished citizens,* that I need scarcely allude to it. It will be sufficient to remark, that gross sensuality interferes with the rights, and frequently with the most cherished rights, of others, and is universally thus acknowledged to be a public nuisance. And when it is refined, it tends to create a marked and visible distinction between the different classes of society. Its cherished object is, to make this distinction heard, and seen, and felt; and heard, and seen, and felt, at every moment, in every place, and in every company. This, I say, is its object, and this is its folly and its crime, and hence arises its mischievous tendency. Men do not complain of their fellow-citizen, because he is richer than they; but they do complain, if he takes pains, every hour of the day, to remind them of it.

* JOHN WHIPPLE, Esq., in his Oration, on the 4th of July.

Any man who chooses, is welcome to wear a better coat than I, but I confess I might be annoyed, if he were to stop me whenever we met, to compare our coats together. It is, therefore, from this frivolous sensuality, that much of that radicalism which would abolish all property, and extinguish all right, takes its origin. Its consequences, therefore, in a political view, are graver than might at first be imagined.

But who does not see that these evil tendencies, which cannot but arise from the increase of individual and national wealth, are best corrected by the cultivation of man's intellectual and spiritual nature ?

Since the tendencies to sensuality are so strong, and their results so deleterious, it is surely of importance to present something else which may temper the eagerness for organic pleasure, and allure the soul, even for a while, from the gratification of the appetites. It is surely useful to place before the eyes of men the fact, that they are not *all carnal* ; that they have an immaterial nature, which, little as they may have thought of it, is capable of holding communion with the wise and good of other ages ; nay, of holding intimate communion with the Creator himself. The mere knowledge of this fact will frequently suffice, at the outset, to determine the choice, for life, in a mind of high natural aspirings, and turn it off forever from

the beholding of vanity. And, at a later period, when the soul has drained the cup of sensual pleasure, and has discovered the tastelessness, if not the bitterness of its dregs, the means of intellectual gratification being placed within its reach, may crimson the cheek with the blush of ingenuous sorrow, redeem many a lost one from the slavery of the senses, and restore him to the dignity of a thinking, independent, reasonable being.

Not only, however, do we propose to substitute for the gratifications of the senses something else ; we substitute something which the reason and conscience of men themselves confess to be better. Sensuality degrades a man in his own estimation. His spiritual nature scorns the indignity to which she is subjected. Alone, the man dare not think upon himself, and in society he shrinks from a comparison with high-souled, independent purity. And even the lighter forms of frivolity, though they be not chargeable with the atrocity of vice, yet cannot escape the confession of their own inherent littleness. On the contrary, intellectual cultivation restores the man to his true place in the creation of God. He learns to rejoice that he is a thinking being. His mind becomes to him a kingdom. Delivered from the thralldom of the senses, he can look with pity on the gilded manacles which are ostentatiously displayed around him, and rejoice, that, except from the commission of wrong, it is not possible that he should ever be despicable.

And still more. Intellectual cultivation enlists in its favor all the better sympathies of our nature. A life of organic pleasure, or of fashionable dissipation, is at variance with every thing lovely in the domestic society. In its nature selfish, it displays its most disgusting features among those with whom it is most intimately associated. Making every individual, in his own view, the centre of the system in which he moves, it leads to the usurpation of power in parents, to the disobedience to just authority in children, and sows the seeds of perpetual altercation amid all the most endearing relationships. Thus is it, that, often beneath the guise of all that is decorous and polite, there may be seen the festering of envy rendered malignant by perpetual contact, and inflamed into hatred by the collisions of incessant rivalry. On the contrary, a cultivated intellect is in its nature disinterested. Its pleasures are, by necessity, sympathetic and social. By subduing the passions, it removes the occasions of strife; and by presenting common sources of pleasure, it imparts a new charm to every social relation. Instead of driving men abroad in pursuit of pleasure, it attracts each to the innocent and deep-toned happiness of home. To them, no one can be so brutal, as to be utterly insensible. I say, then, that the pleasures of intellect, claiming as their allies every better feeling of our nature, may most successfully be employed as the antagonist forces to a refined sensuality.

And if, for a moment, we contemplate the *political* bearings of this subject, we shall find them far from uninteresting.

It can have escaped the observation of no one, that one of the greatest political dangers to which this country is exposed, arises from a feeling of estrangement between the rich and the poor. I do not suppose, however, that the capitalist and laborer will ever be here arrayed in arms against each other. In a country where neither entail nor primogeniture can exist, the conditions of men change so rapidly, that a contest between these two classes, by physical force, is scarcely to be apprehended. We have, however, reason to fear, that this feeling of estrangement may lead the different classes of society to look with indifference upon the rights of each other. The majority, for the time being, will then trample upon the rights of the minority; constitutions, and law, and equity, will be forgotten, and the only rule recognised, will be the will of the strongest. Each party, as, in the mutation of politics, it comes into power, will improve upon the example of its predecessor; and thus, each in turn will suffer and will inflict the most aggravated wrong. The result of this may be easily predicted. All men hate injustice when they themselves are the sufferers; and, as all in turn suffer, they will all in turn lightly esteem that form of government under which injustice may so easily be perpetrated. A growing disaf-

fection toward republican institutions will thus be engendered, and all will consent to submit to the tyranny of one, in order to be delivered from the tyranny of many. This, I hold, to be the danger, to which, at this moment, we are in this country exposed; and I almost fear, that, from this very cause, some symptoms of a want of confidence in the permanence of our free institutions, have already become apparent.

Now I do not suppose, that either the love of power, the lust of gain, or the rapacity of selfishness can be eradicated from the bosom of man by any other means than by the inculcation of moral principle. But while I grant this, I still insist that there are various *means* by which man may be brought, more immediately, under the influence of moral principle; means, which, also, of themselves, tend to moderate the ferocity of the passions, and to blend into harmony the jarring interests of men. Among them, I hesitate not to assign the first place to the universal dissemination of the opportunities for high intellectual cultivation.

The manner in which this is accomplished, may be very easily shown.

Intellectual cultivation opens to men a new path to social distinction. So long as men are merely occupied with the accumulation of wealth, the possession of wealth confers the only title to emi-

nence. Hence, society is divided, horizontally, into two classes, the rich and the not rich, the capitalist and the laborer. But, so soon as men begin to reflect, and, by reflection, to expand and invigorate their own intellects, a mighty change of opinions is immediately effected. The man discovers within himself a new element of value, and he discovers that the same element exists, in different degrees, in the other men around him. A new order, the order of merit, is created, and its distinctions are cheerfully conferred on every one who is worthy. Poverty here works no exclusion, and wealth furnishes no recommendation. The man who is denied admission to the aristocracy of property, is welcomed into the prouder and nobler aristocracy of talent. He feels that he may occupy a position in society according to his deserts, and the aspirations of his soul are satisfied. Now, the benefit of all this is twofold. In the first place, it moderates the insolence of wealth, by setting at naught its exclusiveness, and teaching that distinctions more permanent and more illustrious than it can possibly confer, are open to all. And, on the other hand, by reducing the value of wealth to its true level, it becomes in a less degree an object of envy; and thus, by making it less exclusively desirable, makes the possession of it vastly more secure.

But, while intellectual cultivation opens a new path to distinction, its tendency, far from setting

men at variance with each other, is directly to bring them into harmony. The intellectual gifts of the Creator are impartially bestowed upon the rich and the poor. Wealth presents few, if any, peculiar opportunities for development of mind. The capitalist of twenty thousand a year, has no more leisure for study than the industrious mechanic. And thus we find, in fact, that the names which have done the most to render our country illustrious, the Franklins, the Rittenhouses, the Bowditches of science, have sprung from the industrious classes of society, and have laid the foundations of their fame in the hours redeemed from the labors of a toilsome profession. Hence, when men meet together as *intellectual* beings, the rich man has nothing whereof to boast, and the poor man nothing whereof to be ashamed. Every other distinction fades away before the distinctions of knowledge and virtue. Here it is a wise man that is strong, it is a man of understanding that increases strength. In such society, the palm is always awarded to the wisest; artificial distinctions are forgotten, and no man can claim superiority over his fellows except it hath been freely awarded to him, for the reason that he hath deserved it.

I am not here setting before you the abstract speculations of the closet. It is matter of historical fact, that such has always been the tendency of society, so soon as the mind of the mass of men has been stimulated to intellectual cultivation. It

is this which has elevated the English commoner, whose ancestor was a serf, bought and sold with the soil, to a place in society by the side of the proudest peer in the realm ; nay, which has given to Scott, and Davy, and Wollaston, and Wilberforce, and Burke, and Pitt, and a thousand others, a definite and permanent rank, in comparison with which the blazonry of a herald's office looks pale. And over the whole civilized world, at the present moment, you will find, that, just in proportion to the degree of intellectual development to which the mass of the people have attained, artificial distinctions have faded away, the people have become more and more homogeneous and more democratic, and every man more certainly takes precedence of his fellows upon the ground of what God hath made him, and what he hath made himself.

And, yet more. Every one must see that a very high degree of universal intelligence is absolutely demanded by the very theory of our republican institutions. We have reversed the whole ancient order of things. By the letter and the spirit of our constitution, the *many*, and not the *few*, are the sovereigns of this land. The people make the laws, and the people themselves carry the laws into execution. Unless, then, the people be intelligent and virtuous, our whole theory of government does not attain to the dignity of a solemn mockery; it is all a ridiculous farce. Frequently, we smile at the theory of hereditary governments,

in which a thoughtless stripling or an imbecile driveller may sway the destinies of a nation. This, to be sure, is bad enough, when it occurs by accident, and when the power of the throne is restricted within its own constitutional limits. But what terms shall adequately define our folly, if, having committed to the whole people the absolute sovereignty over every one of us, we shall take no pains to prepare them to discharge the duties of their high office, but surrender them to the dominion of ignorance rendered arrogant by power, and passion made frantic by uncontrolled gratification? No, my fellow-citizens, the very facts of our social condition render a vigorous and sustained effort for the diffusion of high intelligence, imperatively necessary. The education of princes in other countries, must be the education of the people in this. Unless this be substantially the case, the permanency of our institutions has not yet been secured.

I have so long detained you on the social bearings of this subject, that I shall add but a paragraph or two on the connexion between intellectual cultivation and the interests of morality and religion.

And here I hesitate not to avow, that it is not the direct object of the Athenæum to circulate religious truth, or to oppose religious error. Its object is to circulate *knowledge*, and its plan em-

braces the collection of religious books, only in so far as they hold a place among the other departments of science. The dissemination of religious truth is already provided for, by other modes of voluntary association. The primary object of this institution is the diffusion of useful, innocent, and attractive knowledge.

But though such be the limits within which its efforts are restricted, it presents the strongest claims to the support of every moral and religious man. By rescuing our population from the dominion of the senses, it will deliver our youth from the strongest temptations of vice. By alluring men away from the fascinations of refined self-gratification, and directing their attention to the true, the beautiful, and the good, it places their minds in harmony with all that the pen of inspiration has recorded. By allaying the bitterness of party rancor, and softening the asperities of political strife, it leaves the mind at leisure to listen with calmness to the instructions of reason, and to hearken with reverence to the oracles of God. Were this all, every religious man would surely desire to combine with his fellow-citizens, in the effort to ensure to this enterprise the most triumphant success.

But this is not all. The religion of Jesus Christ chooses to walk abroad in the pure daylight of universal truth. She throws down her claims in